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Champlain and the French in New York

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Albany, 1959

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Champlain and the French in New York

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Introduction

SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN'S ARRIVAL within the area of what is now New York State was one step in the transatlantic procession that began soon after 1492. Columbus had removed barriers to the unknown and, like Champlain and many others, to the astronauts of the present, he revealed man's constant desire to seek enlightenment and to expand the horizons around him.

Following Columbus, Europe embarked on an Age of Discovery as brave and curious adventurers put to sea in search of new parts of the world. In bravery and curiosity and in their unbounded eagerness to learn more about the surrounding world, few surpassed Columbus or Champlain. Yet other men of western Europe displayed these same qualities. They were modern men of the Renaissance, with limitless energy and enthusiasm for developing the new and unusual, who directed their vision and ideas toward transforming Europe and producing great masterpieces of artistic expression, new forms of literary achievement, different directions in statecraft, and, along with all the innovations, a completely fresh concept of the role of man in relation to his surroundings.

Many daring men ventured into uncharted seas with a practical purpose: locating a short route to the Far East, where they sought treasures beyond comparison with anything available in the West. Columbus had sailed west to seek a new route to fabled Cathay—a route that would bypass Venetian merchants and the Arab world. Instead of locating a new route, Columbus had discovered a new continent. For Europeans who were magnetized by the riches of the Orient, the Western Hemisphere was an obstruction. A groundswell of activity followed Columbus' discovery. It caught up the seamen of western Europe and carried them along in a frenzied search for a direct passage through or around the landmass of the New World.

When the Renaissance raised the curtain on the modern world, it also disclosed the first faltering appearance of nationalism. This force of far-reaching significance had brought about a centralization of royal authority and the formation of national states. New nations along the eastern shores of the Atlantic came into being and each looked beyond those waters toward new sources of wealth and to advancing its prestige above that of its rivals. Henry the Navigator, in Portugal, and Ferdinand and Isabella, of Spain, had taken the lead in establishing monarchical regimes and overseas empires. Their efforts set a pattern for others on the continent to copy; France, England and The Netherlands followed with similar developments at home and abroad.

French Interests in the New World

In France, the record of looking beyond European horizons was already extensive. Its crusaders had journeyed to the Holy Land and its traders had frequent contacts with west Africa. Under the rule of Francis I, the forces of centralization and nationalism placed France in a new position of prominence. That monarch determined to surpass the flourishing culture of Renaissance Italy. But he also looked in the opposite direction—to the Atlantic Ocean and beyond. There Francis launched a maritime program he hoped would crack the monopoly of discoveries held by rival Spain and Portugal. His interest in locating the direct passage to Asia and its riches started France on an imperial policy that led Champlain, in the next century, on his explorations in the New World.

France's first official expedition to locate the long-sought route set sail in January 1524. Francis I sponsored the project and its vessel, the *Dauphine*—a three-masted, 100-ton craft with a long stern, which previously had been a fighting ship—was named for the six-year-old heir to the throne. Among the 50-man crew was the scientific leader of the expedition, Giovanni da Verrazzano. Verrazzano was born in Florence, Italy, but he had lived in France so many years that he was accepted as a Frenchman. Like other Italian-born adventurers—Columbus, Cabot and Vespucci—he won fame serving another nation.

The *Dauphine* sailed westward through the winter storms of the North Atlantic and 50 days later sighted land along the coast of Georgia or South Carolina. The ship followed the shoreline northward, heading into several of the bays along the route in hope of finding the entrance to the Northwest Passage. On or about April 17, 1524, the *Dauphine* reached New York Bay. Here by the waters of the world's greatest natural harbor, Verrazzano made the first written description of any part of our State:

> We found a very agreeable site located within two small prominent hills, in the midst of which flowed to the sea a very big river, which was deep within the mouth. . . . We entered said river about half a league within the land, where we saw it made a very beautiful lake with a circuit of about three leagues. . . .

In Verrazzano's account, part of the crew put out in a small boat in the Lower Bay, passed through the Narrows and moved into the Upper Bay. He noted the existence of the places now named Staten Island and Brooklyn's Bay Ridge, but if he saw the Hudson River or Manhattan Island he did not mention them.

Indians on shore, colorfully clothed in feathers, beckoned to the Frenchmen to land. They were prevented from accepting the invitation or continuing their observations by "a gale of unfavorable wind" that forced them to return to their ship. During the few hours' visit, they gave the name of Angoulême to the area in honor of their king, Francis I, Count of Angoulême; they also named the bay Sainte Marguerite after the king's sister. The expedition records noted that the explorers appreciated both the convenience and the beauty of the location but they never landed nor returned to the spot. After the threatening wind, the *Dauphine* spread sail, put to sea and followed the coast of New England and Nova Scotia before returning to France in midsummer.

When the *Dauphine* dropped anchor in the harbor of Dieppe, the dynastic struggles and the religious upheaval on the continent prevented France from following up these preliminary discoveries. Verrazzano made his report to the king, but in the turmoil of international conflict and internal disruption it was lost and forgotten. Not until the first part of the 20th century did an original copy come to light.

Sailors along the French seacoast, however, did not forget about the New World. Innumerable hardy seamen from Norman and Breton ports regularly sailed across the North Atlantic. They had as their practical objective the codfish of the Grand Banks off Newfoundland. While many never went beyond this foggy region, some landed in search of wood for fuel or to make repairs. They left no written accounts of their adventures, but by the end of the 16th century this fishing fleet totaled about 1,000 vessels a year.

It is not surprising, therefore, that France's second official expedition sailed from one of these Breton ports. From St. Malo, Jacques Cartier, who had previously shipped on one of the many unrecorded transatlantic voyages, put to sea on another search for the route to the Indies. An unusually rapid crossing in the spring of 1534 brought him to Newfoundland, where he made the first description of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and its still-ice-covered coast. In July, Cartier and his crew carried ashore their 30-foot-high cross with its *fleur-de-lis* decorated shield and the legend, *Vive le Roi de France*. Cartier thereupon implanted France's claims to the area it would rule for more than 200 years. He further extended that claim the following year when he led a fleet of three vessels into the St. Lawrence. Cartier gave that river its present name and followed its course a thousand miles inland with the expectation of finding the channel to the Orient. He admired the grandeur of the scenery, but he was disappointed in not

locating any strait leading to the distant sea nor in finding any mines with precious metals.

Cartier could not help noticing another kind of wealth that abounded in the North American wilderness. Muskrat, otter, marten, fox and beaver were plentiful, with the latter animal the most prized of all. Beaver dams and lodges crowded almost every stream. The beaver's chunky shape—40 to 60 pounds spread over a three- to four-foot-long frame—and the conspicuous long, sharp teeth and the broad, flat tail gave him no attractive appearance. But on his back he wore a close, fine fur. Europeans demanded hats made from the soft wool of the beaver's covering, and it was this brown or black coat that proved to be North America's real Golconda. To supply the fur market, men followed this source of wealth into untold miles of wilderness; they started communities that grew into cities; and they fought and cheated and lied, while whole empires were built and lost.

Cartier had turned attention to a region of unimagined extent and resources. Fishermen and fur traders lost little time in seeking out the wealth in water and woodlands. As for giving official attention to the area, once again France did nothing because of continued strife that demanded all her energies on the continent. Only at the end of the century was the nation able to capitalize on the earlier discoveries.

In the ensuing epic, of following up what Cartier had begun, in carrying forward the flag of France and in developing an empire in North America, one person stands out above all others. He was Samuel de Champlain.

Samuel de Champlain

THE EXACT DATE of Champlain's birth is not known, but the year 1567 is generally accepted. Nor do we have any definite information about his early life. We can easily assume, however, that he had contacts with seamen at the place of his birth—the French port of Brouage—and that he had rather extensive seafaring experiences during his youth. When Champlain was growing up, Brouage was one of France's leading ports. It had the advantage of a deep harbor and nearby salt marshes that brought many ships to load salt– a necessary part of most cargoes. At one time it was so thriving and well-located that there were plans to make Brouage France's chief port. During the merciless religious wars that disrupted France during the 16th and 17th centuries, Brouage passed back and forth from one side to the other. In the next century, an attack of one of those

Shoreline and ramparts at Brouage, France

Courtesy of French Embassy Press and Information Division

mysterious maladies identified only as "a fever" made the once-flourishing port a ghost town. Today it stands on the road from Rochefort to Marennes, almost forgotten except for the tourist who is willing to go out of his way to examine the remaining fortifications.

In this environment of maritime affairs, Champlain reached maturity. In the light of his later experiences, Champlain must have had many practical lessons on shipboard and in merchant's offices. His name first appears, during the religious wars, as quartermaster in the royal navy. At the conclusion of this dispute, Champlain signed on in charge of a French ship chartered to Spain for a trip to Central America and the West Indies. Once again he received lessons in the school of practical experience. The lushness of semitropical natural life impressed this adventurer in the New World. His drawings of the flora and fauna reveal his careful, if not skillful, eye. The voyage also gave Champlain the opportunity to observe the results of Spanish colonial administration and to see both its advantages and disadvantages. Above all, he was swept along into the current of overseas expansion. Champlain was determined that France, too, should have the prestige and commercial advantages of colonies across the seas.

It took Champlain three years to realize his ambitions to bring French interests to the New World. More than half his life had already passed, but in the years left to him he firmly imprinted his personality and spirit on the history of the New World. In March of 1603, Champlain set sail on his first trip to North America. It was a commercial venture from which the merchant-backers hoped to make a profit on furs. Champlain's mission was to report to the king the events and accomplishments of the voyage. Following Cartier's route, the fleet of three vessels sailed across the Atlantic and into the wide mouth of the St. Lawrence River. On May 27, 1603, Champlain first set foot on the land with which he was to become so closely connected the rest of his life. He landed at Tadoussac, where the majestic Saguenay River flows between towering cliffs to join the St. Lawrence. Here was the rendezvous spot for the Indians who, almost every season since the voyages of Cartier, brought their catch of furs to barter with French traders.

Indian customs and dress impressed the inquisitive Frenchman. But Champlain did not cross the Atlantic merely to study native life. Much more fundamental was the search for a Northwest Passage to the Orient—a goal that would occupy his attention for a dozen years and carry him to new parts of the vast wilderness. The routes for the restless explorer to follow were many, and he lost little time testing all possibilities. Champlain went up the Saguenay, where Indians told him of the existence of the body of water later to be known as Hudson Bay. He followed his guides up the St. Lawrence, making a side journey in the Richelieu River; then continuing on up the St. Lawrence until the Lachine Rapids stopped further explorations. These were described by Champlain as "a torrent of water descending with an impetuosity such as I have never before witnessed."

In fulfilling his duties as royal reporter, Champlain constantly questioned the natives about other waterways and routes. He carefully noted any geographical details he could obtain. Information from the Indians was sometimes confused and inaccurate, but he tried to remember as much as possible. In these early excursions, Champlain mentioned waterways that we now recognize as the Ottawa River, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario and Niagara Falls; other references suggest the Oswego and Genesee Rivers. Champlain was confident that the South Seas were not far away. He kept this belief for years, regularly seeking the supporting evidence.

The first voyage brought back to France a rich cargo of furs. Commercially the trip had been successful while it made Champlain's taste for the New World sharper than ever. When the opportunity arose

Part of Champlain's map of New France, from the 1613 edition of his *Voyages,* showing Lake Champlain in the center. The St. Lawrence River flows across the middle section. The Atlantic Ocean is in the lower right-hand corner. The "castor" in the upper right-hand corner is the artist's drawing of a beaver.

to make a second voyage, he had little trouble associating himself with Sieur de Monts, the recipient of a royal charter that covered territory in the New World from Cape Breton south to Philadelphia. When de Monts hopefully set out in the spring of 1604 with a handful of colonists, Champlain accompanied the project as geographer and cartographer. He rejoiced that he was again bound for North America, where he would spend almost four years before returning to his native soil.

Instead of heading for the St. Lawrence, however, the expedition sailed into the Bay of Fundy, crossed over to New Brunswick and followed the Maine coast as far as the Penobscot River. They then headed their ships into Passamaquoddy Bay and up the St. Croix River in search of a spot to spend the winter. An island there took their fancy. But what seemed suitable in the golden light of late summer soon lost its attractiveness with the arrival of winter. Snow came early in October that year and lasted until the end of April. In a spot where the ordinary winter is severe, that of 1604-05 was unusually bitter. Flowing ice cut them off from the mainland and they were imprisoned with insufficient fuel and unsatisfactory food. Scurvy assaulted the group. By the time mild weather returned, 35 of the original 79 had died and another 20 were close to the grave.

Champlain protested that winter lasted six months. However, his introduction to the rigors of that season was about the worst he would spend in North America. The location for the next two, on the west side of Nova Scotia at Port Royal, eight miles southwest of the present Annapolis Royal, was more carefully selected and provided a more comfortable stay. Only Champlain and two other survivors from the bleak winter at St. Croix remained, however.

After the cruel treatment from the winter weather, summer in New England was a decidedly pleasant contrast. Champlain spent the next two summers cruising along the New England coast. His vessel nosed into the bays and coves and rounded the capes. The first summer he reached Cape Cod. The following summer he had hopes of sailing as far as Florida, but because of a late start in the season the 1606 expedition covered much of the same shoreline as in the previous summer. They did, however, sail completely around Cape Cod that year and went as far west as Woods Hole and Buzzard's Bay.

The splendors of the coastline helped to mitigate some of the crises. Champlain lavishly praised the fruits, vegetables and seafood of the region. But the wreck of one of the group's vessels could not be lightly dismissed. And in each of the summers, hostilities disrupted the usual harmonious relations with the natives. In the first summer, one

unfortunate Frenchman lost his life, and during the second, a pitched battle put several of the newcomers in Massachusetts graves.

Champlain's return to France in 1607 found him no less eager to promote another expedition and colonization attempt. He still had high hopes for reaching the South Seas, but he never forgot his aim to spread French authority and to secure for France a more advantageous situation in the fur trade. Once more, Champlain's powers of persuasion were successful. With royal assent and de Monts' backing, another expedition left for the St. Lawrence. This time, Champlain carried a commission as lieutenant in charge of civil administration. Champlain's authority had progressively increased and his contributions and versatility were recognized.

The expedition of 1608 reached Tadoussac, but Champlain had already decided that the fur rendezvous should be nearer to the source of supply. On July 3 he selected a narrow spot in the St. Lawrence as a suitable location. There, on the site of the present city of Quebec, he began preparations to spend the winter. Champlain constructed a *habitation* in the community that is the oldest continually occupied settlement north of Florida. In spite of early preparations for Champlain's fourth winter in North America, this one was to be the worst of all. Champlain himself fell victim to scurvy, and 20 of the 28 residents of the *habitation* did not live through the season. As if the handful of Europeans did not have troubles enough of their own, starving Indians came to beg for food and supplies. Their pitiful condition dismayed Champlain, but he had little to share with them. These were Montagnais, a nondescript tribe that lived along the St. Lawrence.

Champlain had had satisfactory relations with the Hurons and Algonquins with whom he dealt in the area. He knew about the center of the Huron tribes, to the west, along the shore of what is now Georgian Bay in western Ontario. He knew how they had been driven there from their former area by the Iroquois—their sworn enemies. The Hurons and Algonquins told him about this belligerent group, who lived off to the south, stretched across miles of territory. There, the Five Nations of the Iroquois League dominated most of what is now New York State. At the eastern end, near to the Hudson River and along the banks of the river that carried their name lived the Mohawks—"keepers of the eastern door." To the west were the longhouses of the Oneidas and beyond them the Onondagas—"keepers of the council fire." Next came the Cayugas, and, at the western end, the Senecas—"the keepers of the western door." After 1722, the

League became the Six Nations with the addition of the Tuscaroras, an Iroquois tribe from North Carolina.

Ranging along the Mohawk from the Hudson and almost as far west as the Niagara Frontier, warriors of the Five Nations could move swiftly in every direction by following river valleys and other nearby water routes. The five separate tribes had formed the League to establish peace among themselves. But they were also determined to extend their authority and bring peace, on Iroquois terms, to an ever-expanding bloc. Few tribes were safe from the Iroquois and their attempts at conquest and domination. Hurons and Algonquins, whom they had driven to the north, were the most frequent victims of the "homicidal frenzy" of the Five Nations. Later, an economic motivation guided Iroquois expansion westward into the present area of Ohio and beyond. They moved in that direction with the hope of controlling the fur trade. When furs were exhausted in the Iroquois hunting grounds, they needed a new source of supply. Furs were the only medium of exchange with which they bartered for guns, powder and the other desirable products that European traders brought. This economic role of the warriors of the Five Nations shaped the direction of history in the New World for a century and a half.

Champlain's First New York Expedition

DROPPED IN THE MIDST of this tribal rivalry as he was, Champlain had no other choice but to agree to accompany a Huron war party in the summer of 1609. He depended on their friendship in the fur trade and he looked to them for geographical details that one day might lead him on the proper path to the Northwest Passage. Moreover, as a practical matter of self-defense, the French could not afford to arouse the hostility of their neighbors. They had committed themselves to trade and settlement along the St. Lawrence, and they needed the friendship of the natives. Champlain had to support the Hurons in their traditional attitudes toward their enemies. He could not indicate a willingness to make peace with the Iroquois. Nor could he remain neutral without losing the friendship of the Hurons and bringing disaster to New France.

Champlain informed the Hurons he had no other purpose but to engage in war and that he was not interested in trade. As proof of the Franco-Huron alliance, he agreed to set off for enemy territory. The invading force consisted of 60 Hurons, Algonquins and Montagnais, supported by Champlain and two French soldiers. They traveled in 24 canoes up the Richelieu River—then called the Iroquois,

because of its direct route to the land of the enemy. On July 14, 1609, Champlain reached the lake that now bears his name. In the summer season the setting was unlike anything Champlain had yet seen. To the east rose the Green Mountains with their stony surfaces that Champlain mistook for a covering of snow. Ahead towered the peaks of the Adirondacks. Along the shore were dense forests, vine-covered banks and numerous waterfalls. Wildlife swarmed all about and Champlain noted the quantity of beaver in the waters. He observed the variety of natural beauties with amazement and appreciation.

The corps of canoes moved cautiously along the west side of the lake. As the French and Indians approached the enemy, they traveled only by night, resting during the day behind carefully made barricades but, to Champlain's distress, without posting any guards or sentries. About 10 o'clock at night on July 29, Champlain and his cohorts encountered the enemy. The meeting place Champlain describes as "the extremity of a cape which extends into the lake on the western bank." He also states he visited the falls in the outlet from Lake George. Every indication, therefore, points to the location of the battle on the shoreline of the promontory on which Fort Ticonderoga would later stand.

Fighting was postponed until daybreak. The night was spent in singing and dancing with each side trying to outdo the other in the loudness of their cries and in the virulence of their insults. Champlain remained out of sight until daybreak, when he and his companions readied their guns and attired themselves in light armor. They went ashore and saw the enemy leave its barricade. Champlain counted nearly 200 Mohawks—all of them stout and rugged in appearance. Their chiefs sported headdresses of three large plumes. Champlain made them his special targets. He and his allies ran toward the enemy while the two soldiers hid in the woods. The ranks of Hurons opened to let Champlain pass until he stood alone, 20 feet in front of his force and about 30 feet away from the Iroquois. Champlain later described, in detail, the brief battle that followed.

> When I saw them making a move to fire at us, I rested my musket against my cheek, and aimed directly at one of the three chiefs. With the same shot, two fell to the ground; and one of their men was so wounded that he died some time after. I had loaded my musket with four balls. When our side saw this shot so favorable for them, they began to raise such loud cries that one could not have heard it thunder. Meanwhile, the arrows flew on both sides. The Iroquois were greatly astonished that two men had been so quickly killed, although they were equipped

with armor woven from cotton thread, and with wood which was proof against their arrows. This caused great alarm among them.

As I was loading again, one of my companions fired a shot from the woods, which astonished them anew to such a degree that, seeing their chiefs dead, they lost courage, and took to flight, abandoning their camp and fort, and fleeing into the woods, whither I pursued them, killing still more of them. Our savages also killed several of them, and took ten or twelve prisoners. The remainder escaped with the wounded. Fifteen or sixteen were wounded on our side with arrow-shots; but they were soon healed.

The brief battle was followed by a three-hour victory celebration of feasting on Iroquois corn and singing and dancing. Champlain concludes his account by locating the place of the encounter and with the modest statement that "the lake was called Lake Champlain."

Champlain turned his back on New York's area without ever being aware that another intrepid explorer would, a few weeks later, abandon his search, 100 miles to the south, for a Northwest Passage. Late in September 1609, Henry Hudson sailed the *Half Moon,* flying the flag of The Netherlands, to the end of deep water in the river to be named after him. He had not found the route to the Pacific, but he laid the basis for Dutch claims to the Hudson Valley and the start of the briefly held empire on the North American continent. And the two bodies of water—Champlain's lake and Hudson's river—became routes for colonial expansion and imperial conflict.

The return trip down the lake revealed to Champlain the cruelty of Indians toward their captured enemies. They bound the victim, tore off his nails and continued with other tortures until they observed Champlain's displeasure. They allowed him to end the victim's torments with a single shot after which they dismembered the body and forced other prisoners to eat portions of the heart. When the victorious expedition approached Tadoussac, the warriors mounted scalps of their enemies on sticks to display their prowess to the village. Some of the native women eagerly seized the scalps to wear proudly like costly decorations. One of the chiefs of the Montagnais presented Champlain with a scalp to take with him back to the French king.

Six years passed before Champlain returned to the territory of New York State. Many of the eventful occurrences in this period of Champlain's career took place in France. His personal life took a new direction on December 29, 1610, when he signed a contract to marry Hélène Boullé, the 12-year-old daughter of a well-to-do member of the bourgeoisie. The motives of the 43-year-old adventurer in this

Champlain's battle with the Iroquois, July 30, 1609. From the 1613 edition of his *Voyages*

alliance must remain hidden. We do know, however, that because of the tender age of the bride, the marriage was not to be carried out for two years. Moreover, as a custom of the time, the age difference probably did not appear so unusual as it does to us. Champlain seems never to have had a life of much domesticity; indeed, *la jeune Hélène* did not accompany him to New France until 10 years had passed.

Champlain carried on his life much as he had previously. Most of the time in France was devoted to obtaining support for his plans in New France. The fur trade had not turned out profitably for his backers. Competition cut down profits and the king refused to grant a monopoly in the trade. It was a constant struggle to win backing for his overseas ventures and he faced continual difficulties in obtaining men and women colonists for the New World. Champlain did what he could to stir up interest. Many times after returning from his travels in the New World, Champlain published accounts of his experiences. He tried to make his books attractive and practical in order to entice settlers to New France. A small volume of 80 pages described his voyage of 1603. Then a more handsome edition of *Voyages* with maps and illustrations related his adventures from 1603 to 1613. In 1619 a third volume told about his adventures between 1615 and 1619, and his last work appeared in 1632. This publication included a digest of the earlier books plus his journal from 1620 to 1631. The author must have been pleased at seeing his volumes go through additional printings.

Champlain, however, never lost sight of his goals in the New World. To his commercial and patriotic motives he now added the spiritual. He hoped fervently that missionaries would bring Christianity to the Indians. On his voyage to New France in 1615, he brought with him four Recollect missionaries to begin the arduous task of converting the natives.

His seasons in North America had not accomplished so much as he had hoped. In a battle with the Iroquois, right on the banks of the St. Lawrence, an arrow wounded him. But his chief concern was that the Indians never seemed to be so anxious to travel as he was. It was difficult to persuade them of the importance of investigating travel routes. He disliked the confinement along the St. Lawrence but, finally, in 1613, he joined a Huron party that took him up the Ottawa River as far as Allumette Island in another unsuccessful search for the Northwest Passage. Formidable obstacles faced him along the entire route—treacherous waterfalls and rapids, onerous portages through dense forests and rocky shorelines that would have discouraged any less intrepid explorer.

1619
LES
VOYAGES
du Sr de Champlain Capitaine ordinaire pour le ROY en la nouuelle France es annees 1615. et 1618.
dedies au ROY.
chez L. Collet, au Pallais a Paris.
Auec priuilege du Roy.

Title page from the 1619 edition of Champlain's *Voyages*

Two years later he followed the same route up the Ottawa. But this time there was no turning back. He continued on to the Mattawa, through Lake Nipissing and the French River and on to Georgian Bay. For 100 years, this route was a heavily beaten path for explorers and traders on their way west. Today the lumber, minerals and attractions for sportsmen in the region make it of even greater significance in the Canadian economy.

By following the eastern shore of Georgian Bay, Champlain reached Huronia. He had traveled 700 miles in less than a month, arriving in the region where he had high hopes of finding the sea passage to the Orient. But it was there, at last, that he began to be aware of the impossibility of a direct route to Asia and the futility of his searches. However, he had reached the main villages of his Indian allies. Champlain was not the first European in Huronia. A Recollect missionary welcomed New France's civil administrator and one of the most far-wandering of all the French adventurers, Etienne Brûlé, had already visited Huronia during one of his ceaseless journeys.

Champlain Returns to New York

NATIVES IN THE HURON VILLAGES along the shores of Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay supplied the furs—15 to 20 thousand pounds a year—that preserved French interest in North America. If this trade was to be maintained on a high level, Iroquois interference had to be eliminated once and for all. Champlain made up his mind to penetrate the Iroquois curtain to wipe out the constant threats from beyond the St. Lawrence. On this occasion the Hurons reacted with little eagerness to Champlain's proposal. They gave reasons for not undertaking an invasion at the time: they lacked weapons and manpower and they would be no match for the superior Iroquois. But if their allies, the Andastes, who lived along the banks of the upper Susquehanna River, would join them, they would agree to follow Champlain into Iroquois territory. Etienne Brûlé, with a small party of Hurons, set out to make arrangements for this supporting force on a tour that would give Brûlé credit for being the first European in many parts of what is now New York State. For all Brûlé's restlessness and peregrinations, he never made reports and was not even careful about telling his superiors exactly where he had been. He traveled between the present locations of Buffalo and Binghamton, probably by way of the rivers now called the Allegheny, Tioga and Chemung, to the Susquehanna. It is not likely, though, that he ever reached the source of that river.

Champlain left Huronia on September 1, 1615, with a smaller war party than his allies had hoped to assemble. The expedition followed a route that took them across the southern edge of the present Province of Ontario to Lake Ontario by way of the Trent River. They crossed the lake near the entrance of the St. Lawrence and landed on the New York side near the present Stony Point below Henderson Harbor. They left their canoes hidden in woods along the shoreline and advanced along the sandy beach as far as the Salmon River. The invasion force moved through a beautiful countryside, filled with game, vines and magnificent trees. The chestnuts, Champlain discovered, were tasty in spite of their small size. French and Indians forded several of the streams that flow into Oneida Lake, crossed the Oneida River and finally came to the lake itself, even then a popular fishing spot. On October 9, the Hurons captured an Iroquois fishing party of eight women and children and three men. When the Hurons started their usual tortures, Champlain objected to mistreating one of the captive women. He received only the sulky reply that their enemies would do the same to them; they had no intention of stopping the tortures of the men but would do nothing more to the women since Champlain complained.

In midafternoon of October 10, 1615, Champlain and the Hurons reached the enemy fort. There have been many lengthy and involved discussions, sometimes based more upon local pride than upon historical evidence, over the location of this fort. Some authorities have placed it at the eastern end of Lake Onondaga, within the present limits of the city of Syracuse. Others have examined the references with equal care and have concluded the fort was on Nichols Pond, in the Town of Fenner, in Madison County. Although the site of the fort may never be determined with complete and satisfactory accuracy, the burden of the evidence favors Nichols Pond.

The fight began immediately even though Champlain had hoped to wait until the following day to organize his forces. But his Indians were too impatient to get at their enemy. As a result, Champlain had to rescue some of his foolhardy companions from possible Iroquois slaughter. His arquebus drove off the Iroquois and they swiftly retreated into the fort. This stronghold was an extremely well-constructed affair. It had four sturdy palisades made of large timbers, closely interlaced, and about 30 feet in height. At the top, like a parapet, were galleries behind a double thickness of timber. One of the fort's advantages was its strategic location near a good water supply. Gutters carried the water between the palisades in order to put out fires the Iroquois expected their attackers to set.

Champlain had his Indians build a "cavalier," a movable fort, higher than that of the enemy's, with an elevated platform from which they could fire into the interior of the fort. Champlain planned to place on the cavalier's platform his gunmen with their arquebuses and also a supply of rocks to clear the enemy palisades. Champlain also ordered the Hurons to build a "mantelet," another movable contraption in the form of an overhead shield. Under the protection of this shield, besiegers could move close to the fort to set it afire.

When the attack began the following day, Champlain found that he had to depend on a poorly disciplined body of troops. The strongest 200 moved the cavalier "about a pike's length" from the fort. Those who were responsible for the mantelet, however, forgot it. Attempts to set the fort on fire were unsuccessful. Most of Champlain's Indians devoted their energy to shouting. They set up such a din they could not hear his orders, even if they had been inclined to obey them. Gunfire from the arquebusiers was more successful in raining death

Champlain's attack on the Iroquois fort, October 11, 1615. From the 1620 edition of Champlain's *Voyages*.

on the Iroquois. Champlain's forces, however, had three wounded chiefs. He himself received two arrow wounds, one in the leg and one in the knee. With their leaders incapacitated in this way, the Hurons had little taste for continuing the struggle that had already gone on for three hours. Nothing Champlain said could persuade them to resume the attack. The Hurons finally agreed to wait four days for the expected arrival of the 500 Andaste reinforcements.

Champlain noted that the strong winds on October 12 made conditions ideal for setting fire to the fort, but still he received no cooperation. During the remaining days of the Huron encampment, both sides fought more skirmishes from which his arquebusiers regularly had to extricate his reckless allies.

With no sign of the reinforcements, Champlain and his forces began their withdrawal from Iroquois territory. About this maneuver Champlain was able to find something to praise faintly:

> Now the only good point in their manner of making war that I have seen is that they conduct their retreat very securely, putting all the wounded in their midst, and having strong forces in front, on the wings, and the rear, and maintaining order in that formation until they are in a place of safety, without breaking ranks.

Champlain had to be satisfied with the retreat because his wounds prevented him from standing. But the pain from his injured leg was nothing compared to the pain he suffered from being bound, doubled up and immobile, in a basket that the Huron braves took turns carrying on their backs. Champlain's hopes were further blighted when he found the Hurons would not take him to Quebec as he had hoped. A winter in Huronia had little appeal for him, but the Indians displayed even more than their usual stubbornness and he was left with no other choice but to travel in a direction opposite to the one he planned to go. To add to Champlain's unpleasant memories of the ill-fated expedition into New York, he lost himself for two days in the southern Ontario lake country.

The entire project had turned out a failure. Nevertheless, we must not overlook the historical significance of the venture. Champlain's 1609 battle has been described as a turning point of history. Some claim that Champlain's firepower so distressed the Iroquois that they became enemies of the French forever after. It is true, of course, that the Iroquois usually allied themselves with the Dutch and English against the combination of Hurons, Algonquins and French. This alignment came as much from the practical features of geography and from traditional Iroquois-Algonquin hostility as from the French

triumph on the shores of Lake Champlain. A new weapon always spreads terror among those who first experience its effects. But Champlain's arquebus was not an absolute weapon. His gunfire did not produce lasting results when used against the natives on Cape Cod. In addition, the 1615 battle at Nichols Pond proved, if proof were necessary, that the French, with their better arms, were not all-conquering.

Nor did the Iroquois remain steadfast in their loyalty to their allies. They held a strong position for bargaining and they never hesitated to exploit fully this advantage. Given greater manpower and resources, the French could have won over Iroquois friendship on a larger scale. As it was, the French had their greatest success in obtaining an alliance with the Senecas—the nation located closest to the French sphere of influence.

The Nichols Pond encounter, however, represented a turning point in colonial developments and in the history of New York. Champlain had revealed he was not invincible and his prestige with his allies in New France never exceeded the pre-1615 level. The New York campaign of that year changed in no way the situation that had existed before the invasion of Iroquoia. New France and the enlarging fur trade were not secure against Iroquois assaults. The die had been cast to shape a bloody and turbulent future for Indians and Europeans in New York and the adjacent areas.

In contrast to the actual outcome, we can only surmise what might have happened had Champlain been victorious. If the initial attack against the Iroquois fort had been successful or if the Andaste allies had arrived in time to encourage an all-out Huron assault, the invaders undoubtedly would have taken the offensive against other Iroquois villages. A pacified Five Nations combined with an emphatic demonstration of French power would have greatly reduced the Iroquois war potential. With results such as these, we could expect an entirely different course of events from those that the historical record exhibits in the century and a half following 1615. French failure in central New York, therefore, must be regarded as a historic event of far-reaching significance.

Champlain returned to Quebec in 1616 and to France later in the year. He never again set foot in New York. The remaining years of his life, Champlain spent in his native land or close to the main artery of New France. He never continued his explorations beyond the extent of his western journeys in 1613 and 1615. He resigned himself to failure in his attempts to locate the Northwest Passage. Moreover Champlain was now in his fiftieth year and in spite of the vast energy

Monument erected in Brouage in 1878 in honor of Champlain

Courtesy of French Embassy Press and Information Division

and endurance he had enjoyed, less rigorous activity undoubtedly beckoned. He devoted himself with no less energy and enthusiasm to promoting New France. He spent four winters there from 1620 to 1624 with Mme. de Champlain, during her only trip away from her homeland, in what we assume must have been a period of domestic felicity.

But the administrative problems seemed never to diminish. The Iroquois danger continued. Added to it was a new threat from the growing strength of the English colonies in New England. The Anglo-French War of 1628 was a setback to Champlain's dreams and a forecast of future disaster. The fur trade continued on an extensive scale, but the distribution of profits pleased few of the officials who held the ultimate authority. Champlain faced a constant dispute with those who wanted large profits and small expenses. It was difficult to convince them of the advantages of settling colonists in New France. They could only see the added expense and the profits, if any, that would come slowly. Champlain, on his part, however, continued his writing projects to show an agreeable picture of life in New France with practical information for the emigrants he hoped to attract to the settlements along the St. Lawrence.

Death came to Samuel de Champlain on Christmas day in 1635. It ended the life of France's leading and most fervent supporter of colonial expansion. Infused in the personality of this one dynamic figure were all the motives for developing the New World: the insatiable curiosity of the adventurer eager to expand knowledge of the known world and to learn more of the details of new and unusual surroundings; the practical-minded individual ready to secure new profit-making opportunities; the patriotic person anxious to enhance the prestige and glory of his native land; the advocate of spiritual values devoted to bringing the tenets of his faith to those unacquainted with Christian belief. Guided by those qualities, Champlain had laid the foundations for French control and influence in North America. If he had not succeeded in achieving all his aims, it was not because of any lack of aptitude or ardor.

He spent only a few weeks within our State but he gave his name to one of the most beautiful of all bodies of water. And he set a pattern for conflict and rivalry that would continue until the final defeat of French authority.

Missionaries in the Wilderness

OTHERS FROM FRANCE, however, would follow the same trails and waterways that had brought Champlain into the region of our State. And, in the 17th and 18th centuries, many would live and die on New York soil. Furs and faith brought these Frenchmen within the borders of the State. If the fur trade had the greatest influence on events up to 1763, no one can overlook the presence of missionaries and their devoted toil among the Iroquois and neighboring tribes.

The efforts of the first group to come to New France—those four Recollects who accompanied Champlain in 1615—met with discouragement and almost insurmountable obstacles. The Recollects, a subdivision of the Order of Friars Minor, or Franciscans—whose brother missionaries were, at this very time, effectively shaping the development of the southwestern corner of the future United States—traditionally held positions as chaplains in the French army but they had neither the numbers nor influence to conduct missionary activities in New France. Ten years after their arrival in Quebec, the Recollects were replaced by members of the Society of Jesus.

The Jesuit fathers had no easy time either in converting the natives of New France. Opportunities for providing instruction were not plentiful nor were the surroundings conducive to explanations of Christian faith and doctrine. Huron huts were either smoke-filled or cold and the Jesuits described Indian quarters as being more wretched than the poorest hovel in France. But they knew the importance of not complaining nor being troublesome nor of presenting anything but a cheerful face. Especially trying were the long hours spent crouched and motionless on the bottom of a frail canoe. The different standards of values added to the perplexities of the missionaries' work. As one of the Jesuits explained the difficulty:

> All the fine qualities which might make you loved and respected in France are like pearls trampled under the feet of swine, or rather of mules; they utterly despise you when they see you are not as good pack animals as they are. If you could go naked and carry the load of a horse upon your back, as they do, then you would be wise according to their doctrine, and would be recognized as a great man; otherwise, not.

But the missionaries endured more than physical discomforts. There were ordinary problems of communication. The Recollects had prepared a Huron dictionary which the Jesuits used as the basis for a catechism in the Huron language. A dictionary helped little in trying

to explain abstract ideas to people who had no such concepts. And when anything went wrong or a crisis developed, tribal medicine men eagerly blamed the misfortune on the presence of the "Blackrobes."

They had to be satisfied with small results that might easily have discouraged less patient and devoted workers. By 1640 they could count 100 Christians among a Huron population of approximately 16,000. Nevertheless, a beginning had been made and an organization was available that would grow in size and prestige to spread its teaching throughout New France and the adjacent areas. Devout workers founded a hospital and a monastery and, in 1735, started Laval University, an institution of higher education which has served Quebec ever since.

Some missionaries came to New York for only a brief visit. One of these was Joseph de la Roche Dallion, the first priest, if not the first European, to set foot on the western edge of the State. In October 1626, he visited the Neutral Indians near the Niagara Frontier, where he noted the incredible wildlife. After spending an unusually mild winter, Dallion returned to New France. Even though no missioner followed him into the region for 15 years, the local natives long recalled Dallion's visit.

Other missionaries were brought into New York as Indian captives. Foremost of these was Father Isaac Jogues. Jogues had already spent a half dozen years among the villages of Huronia before he was captured by an Iroquois ambush on the St. Lawrence in the summer of 1642. The victors hauled their captives up the Richelieu and into Lake Champlain where five days later the torture ceremonies began. The blows, kicks, cuts and burns were only the preliminaries to more vicious treatment in the Mohawk villages. When they were through tormenting him, Jogues was left with only two fingernails, smashed knuckles and stumps of his other fingers. Forced to go naked much of the time, Father Jogues suffered both from the affront to modesty and from the discomforts of the elements.

In the village of Ossernenon, at the present location of Auriesville, his companions were assassinated and Jogues, himself, lived in hourly expectation of being put to death. Yet he managed to adapt himself with composure to his surroundings and never ceased to look forward to carrying on his missionary activities.

The Dutch in New Netherland learned with horror of this mistreatment of a fellow European by their Mohawk allies. They protested not because of friendship for a Frenchman nor because of fondness for his faith but because of the unthinkable conduct of the Indians toward any member of the "civilized race." The Mohawks

were as reluctant to free Jogues as he was to leave his captors. It was only after a visit to what he described as "the wretched little fort" at Albany that Jogues was persuaded to escape a whole year after his capture. Arent Van Curler, one of the local commissioners, and the Dutch Reformed minister, Jan Megapolensis, at considerable risk to themselves and the small trading community on the Hudson, arranged for Jogues to flee to a boat bound for Europe. At the thriving village at the foot of the Hudson, the Dutch director-general, William Kieft, entertained Jogues while complaining about the stinginess of his compatriots to the north. He had his tailor make for Jogues more suitable clothing, including a cloak and beaver hat.

When Jogues landed in France on Christmas day in 1643, it was as if a ghost had appeared. Reports from missionaries in the New World were published annually as the *Jesuit Relations*. These tales of the adventures and misadventures in North America aroused the interest of French readers; their pages of exciting events and strange surroundings made them the best-sellers of the day. Now, the unexpected appearance of one of the subjects of the *Relations* made him a center of attraction. Father Isaac's chief interest, however, was in receiving news about his fellow Jesuits and resuming his duties in the Huron missions. His superiors finally heeded his wishes and sent Jogues back to his old assignment.

Before traveling to Huronia, however, Jogues returned to the Mohawks as an ambassador with a French peace treaty. On his way to the Mohawk villages, he traveled from Lake Champlain across the portage and into Lake George. He was the first European to see this jewel-like body of water about which few people had known. After the two- or three-day paddle up the lake, Jogues named it on May 30, 1645, *Lac du Saint Sacrement,* or Lake of the Blessed Sacrament. The lake carried that name until William Johnson honored his king by renaming it more than a century later.

The Mohawks gave Jogues an entirely different reception from the time of his first appearance in their villages. Now that he came as an official ambassador, with gifts to go with the position, the Iroquois welcomed him. But this attitude did not last. When Jogues returned some months later, in his priestly capacity, old suspicions broke out anew among those who hated and feared his presence. The Bear Clan finally took action in their own hands, and one of them split open Isaac Jogues' skull as he stepped inside their longhouse in the evening of October 18, 1646. This violent deed marked the first death of a French missionary within the limits of New York State. Almost 300

years later, Jogues and other North American martyrs were honored with sainthood.

In the years following the death of Jogues, the Iroquois let loose all their fury against the Hurons, wiping out entire villages and forcing the abandonment of Huronia. While bellicose chiefs led the Five Nations, the Jesuits attempted no missionary activities in New York. But then, because of a reaction to the militant displays or because the Iroquois were confident that they had nothing to fear from the French and Hurons, they agreed to make peace and requested that a mission be established among them.

The Jesuit Simon Le Moyne was one of those most anxious to make the peace a lasting one so that he could start an effective mission among the Iroquois. On a trip into Onondaga territory in the summer of 1654, Le Moyne wrote the first description of the salt springs at Onondaga Lake—a discovery of the natural resource that became the basis for the later foundation and development of the city of Syracuse. He also found among the Onondaga longhouses many Christian Hurons whom the Iroquois had captured during their recent campaigns. The Mohawks protested to Le Moyne for having ignored them by entering the Five Nations by a rear door instead of following etiquette and visiting the Iroquois by way of the main gate. But the French found more accessible the center of the Five Nations by way of the convenient route of the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario and then the choice of several rivers and lakes into central New York.

Using the foundations that Father Le Moyne had laid, other Jesuits were ready to develop a more extensive Iroquois mission by building in 1655 the first Roman Catholic chapel in New York State. The following year a half dozen Jesuit missionaries, some soldiers and 40 French colonists arrived on the shores of Onondaga Lake determined to make a permanent settlement at the east end of the lake, at a location they named *Sainte Marie du Lac Gannentaha.* They worked hard, slept little and were constantly plagued by gnats, but they succeeded in erecting a small fort located north of the present city of Syracuse. Situated on an eminence commanding the lake, it enclosed about an acre with a blockhouse in one corner and a bastion in another. The fort also had an abundant supply of fresh water while the beans, squash and corn of the area were superior to any the French had previously known.

During 1656, missions spread out to other villages of the Five Nations. The Cayugas and Senecas gave the Jesuits an encouraging welcome, but the Oneidas were less responsive, and relations with the "keepers of the eastern door" were never anything but risky. And,

indeed, once again the Mohawks led the Five Nations on the warpath against the Hurons. In such a situation, the Onondaga missioners decided they could no longer live in safety with the Iroquois. In the loft of the fortification, they secretly built flatboats in which to make an escape. As they could not let the natives know of their plans to flee, they decided to give the Indians an enormous feast, and, on a March night in 1658, stuffed the natives with venison, bear, pig, duck and fish. While the gorged Onondagas slept off the effects of the feasting and celebrating, the French crept off to their boats, traveled 40 miles without stopping, and the next day reached Lake Ontario. After enduring extreme hardships of ice and cold in the St. Lawrence, they arrived at Quebec in mid-April. The surprised and furious Onondagas never knew how the visitors had arranged their successful escape.

During the 1660's and 1670's, the missions again spread into the lodges of the Five Nations. Throughout the remaining years of the 17th century, the fortunes of the missions flourished or failed depending on the relative hostility of the Iroquois. The Blackrobes, however, continued to serve the Five Nations. The Onondagas had been the first to receive the Jesuits and theirs was the last mission to be abandoned. By the second decade of the 18th century, however, the Society of Jesus had lost its influence within New York and concentrated its efforts among the converted Iroquois who had moved closer to the protection of New France. Missionary work among the Iroquois in the 18th century was carried on chiefly by secular priests.

In approximately a half century of devoted toil among the Five Nations, the Jesuits left no great nor lasting record of achievement. They had carried Christianity to many of the natives and they made it possible for later missionaries to cultivate the seeds of faith that the valiant apostles of the New World had planted. Moreover, the Blackrobes supplied the only knowledge of the geography of central New York in the 17th century. As they traversed more and more of the State, their information about geography grew. Their observations received faithful recording in the *Jesuit Relations.* Combined with maps, their reports show a gradual expansion of knowledge of references to the waterways, shorelines and other features of topography.

A whole century later, New York was the scene of an impressive missionary project conceived and guided by Abbé François Picquet at what is now Ogdensburg. Picquet, a 26-year-old member of the Company of the Sulpicians, had arrived in New France in 1734. While working among the missions on the St. Lawrence, he planned an outpost that would be closer to the Iroquois and that would take

them away from their tribal surroundings; French missioners had learned that conversions would be more effective and lasting if the Christian Indians were removed from their traditional environment of pagan customs and authority. In addition, the new communities of "domiciled" Indians furnished protection against assaults from their former clansmen who regarded them as traitors or as enemies.

Picquet selected as his site the strategic junction of the Oswegatchie with the St. Lawrence. He made his choice on November 21, 1748, and, in honor of the feast day, named it *La Présentation*. In the following spring, Picquet and his colony of Indians, soldiers, laborers and craftsmen started construction of a 70-foot square structure. Within six months, however, a Mohawk war party destroyed the new community. In spite of the attack, *La Présentation* continued to grow. During the summer of 1750, Picquet built a stone fort with storehouse, warehouse, stables, ovens and a sawmill. A moat and entrenchments with cedar posts and gallery protected the four stone bastions. Picquet had elaborate plans for his community, situated as it was in a fertile area close to an abundance of fish and game, and by the end of 1751 he had attracted almost 400 native families to the settlement.

While Picquet held the Cross in one hand, his other carried the flag of France. He was a militant missioner who advanced his faith along with French authority. He had selected the site on the Oswegatchie in order to scrutinize English activities at the mouth of the Oswego River. He led the Indians of *La Présentation* in the French campaigns against British outposts in the Hudson and Champlain Valleys. As a result of these activities, the English placed a price on the head of the fighting Abbé.

In the familiar pattern of other forts within New York territory, *La Présentation* was not really defensible and plans to strengthen its defenses were not feasible. Ten years after the settlement's optimistic beginning, soldiers and Indians were transferred to New France and, in 1759, a group returned to salvage the iron and wood from the fortifications before destroying completely what remained of the outpost. The British later rebuilt *La Présentation* and, as Oswegatchie, used it as a stronghold on the St. Lawrence during the American Revolution. The civilian history of what is now Ogdensburg began when Samuel Ogden purchased the region in 1792.

Furs, Foes and Firearms

ACCOMPANYING THE EBB AND FLOOD TIDES of missionary activities in the second half of the 17th century were new and challenging developments to arouse the attention of the officials of New France. One of them was the source of nourishment of the French colony—the fur trade. The other threatened the very life of New France.

Fur traders continually widened their contacts with native suppliers. No longer did they depend solely on the Hurons for the valuable skins, but they spread out to gather in furs from hunters along the shores of all the Great Lakes and in the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi as well. (From 1675 to 1685, the annual shipment of furs averaged 89,000 pounds; in the last two years there had been a decided falling off in the shipments.) Iroquois raids had ended the annual rendezvous on the banks of the St. Lawrence. Instead, *voyageurs* pushed deeper and deeper into the interior of North America. These voyageurs should not be confused with the *coureurs de bois,* who also ranged the wilderness but who carried on business of the trade without an official license. Rugged, skillful, brave and adventurous, the voyageurs gathered in the fur supply and then transported the rich harvests by dugouts, bateaux and rafts, but chiefly by their most useful and valuable craft, the bark canoe. Canoes were made sturdy enough to shoot rapids, yet were light enough to carry over the many portages. During these breaks in the water travel, the portage-collar allowed a voyageur to carry two 90-pound packs of furs or supplies. Some of the fabled men of the group could carry as many as five to eight packs. Equally strenuous was the day's paddling of 12 to 15 hours and the continuous caution that the thin shell of the canoe demanded. Made only of materials available in the forest, canoes varied in size but might carry as much as five tons of freight, crew and passengers.

In the 1660's, English authority spurted from its former locations to raise a frightening, new challenge to New France. In 1664, Peter Stuyvesant surrendered the Dutch colony of New Netherland to English forces and England's colonies now stretched threateningly along the Atlantic seaboard. Six years later the Hudson's Bay Company was chartered. From the company's posts that rimmed New France from the north, English traders limited French opportunities in that direction. Competition, developing on a worldwide scale between the two European powers, became inevitable in the local area. England was now in a position to choke off its traditional rival from south, north and east.

In the ensuing struggle for trade and territory, the Five Nations loomed with greater prominence than ever. Their bargaining posture placed Indian diplomacy on a new level of importance. Summit conferences were frequent. In them, gifts were exchanged, charges and countercharges were made, and promises were given, only to be broken in a short time.

Leaders of New France long followed Champlain's policy of dealing with their adversaries: advance on Iroquoia by following one of the water routes leading from the St. Lawrence to the interior of New York; use friendly tribes to marshal as large an invading force as possible; hurl an attack against a native center; and then rapidly return to New France. Five times within a few decades, expeditions followed this strategy in piercing the Iroquois curtain. In 1666, a winter expedition against the Mohawks proved to be more a test of French endurance than a successful invasion. The forces on snowshoes found nothing but deserted longhouses. Later in the same year, plans to wipe out the Mohawk warriors were again frustrated by empty villages. And, again, the raiders returned northward with only the satisfaction of having set the longhouses on fire and burned the local crops.

The Governor of New France, Marquis de Denonville, made plans for a more elaborate expedition in 1687. In a well-executed maneuver, representatives from the western tribes moved secretly to the appointed rendezvous on Irondequoit Bay. French regulars, Canadian militia, Christian Indians and western savages—an assemblage that totaled about 3,000, including court officers, bush rangers and gaudily decorated natives—made up the largest force ever to appear in New York and the largest for many years in the future. From the landing spot on Irondequoit Bay, the troops marched, in the oppressive July heat, toward their objective, the Seneca village of Gannagaro, on Boughton Hill, south of Victor. As they descended toward an inviting marsh on the edge of the present village of Victor, the advance squad moved blindly into a Seneca ambush. The fury and surprise of the Seneca attack almost routed the invasion forces. But Denonville, attired comfortably in only his underwear, succeeded in rallying his soldiers and preventing serious loss. The campaign continued on to its destination without further opposition, burning Seneca storehouses and destroying the ripening crops. French and Indians proceeded from Boughton Hill to wipe out Seneca communities at the present sites of Honeoye Falls and Mendon Pond. They returned to Irondequoit Bay—a place that attracted the attention of strategists of both empires—where the French later left a trading post.

Once again, the French destruction produced no decisive results. All Denonville had acomplished was to invalidate the patient labors of 20 years of Jesuit missionary work; and the usually tractable Senecas refused to accept any new missions for several years. Denonville, however, had stopped to take possession of New York for France before sailing westward to the mouth of the Niagara to construct a fortification at that strategic spot. But he had not used all his resources to reduce or wipe out the Iroquois war potential. Denonville displayed similar irresolution following the vicious Iroquois attack on the village of Lachine, near Montreal, in August 1689.

In retaliation for Lachine and to remove the threats of encroachment on New France, French officers prepared for a trio of attacks on New England and New York communities. For the first time, New France planned to assault a settlement of Europeans. Here their objective was to be Albany.

While journeying to the destination by way of the frozen lakes, the Indians convinced the French leaders of the dangers in attacking the stronghold at Albany. Schenectady—the farthest outpost of the English settlements—they argued, would offer less resistance. In this they were correct. In spite of the arduous advance through drifting snow and a raging blizzard at the time of attack, they easily stole into the unsuspecting stockade. French and Indians quickly surrounded the small community, set more than 40 houses on fire, and killed some 60 men, women and children, all within two hours. They returned to New France as rapidly as they had come, taking with them 27 prisoners and all the horses of the village. A band of Mohawks shortly afterward dashed in pursuit of the invaders, caught up with them near Montreal, and succeeded in killing or capturing a small portion of the raiding party. The bloody February night of 1690 at Schenectady, combined with the attacks on the New England outposts, served to stir English emotions to a high degree of animosity toward their northern rivals.

French plans to eliminate English competition had not succeeded, yet within a few years, Frontenac, the governor of New France, achieved a signal victory by winning over the western Indians to his side. With this success to his credit, the 75-year-old soldier decided, in 1696, on another punitive campaign against the Iroquois. Advancing from Lake Ontario along the Oswego River, French forces reached the site of the former mission on Onondaga Lake, but when they arrived at the village of the Onondagas, they found only a pile of glowing ashes. A detachment pressed on to destroy Oneida centers. Once

again, the invaders were too easily satisfied and were content with this limited success instead of directing an attack against the Senecas.

In addition to the continuing conflict with the Iroquois, French rivalry with England intensified as their points of contact increased. These developments coming at the end of the 17th century marked the start of 125 years of intermittent conflict between the two powers. In North America, the nations fought four colonial wars that are known as King William's (1689-1697), Queen Anne's (1701-1713), King George's (1744-1748) and the French and Indian (1756-1763) wars. Each of them had its European counterpart. Even after the conquest of New France, the rivals continued their contest for power during the American Revolution and in the Napoleonic period.

Throughout the colonial conflicts, the two nations made their chief objective the rich river valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi. Both nations reached out to grasp land and trade in the area, the English from their compact seaboard settlements and the French from the center of New France along the St. Lawrence River.

In this duel for empire, England and France erected imposing fortifications at strategic locations on lake shores and at river junctions. These solidly implanted strongholds were designed to forestall further advances of the enemy. Their military forces protected vital trade routes and the outposts provided meeting places for the fur trade. Geography dictated that many of the wilderness forts would be constructed on New York territory.

The main route west from New France after the start of the 18th century was by way of the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, the Niagara River and Lake Erie. To protect this thoroughfare, France built Fort Niagara and *La Présentation* and, on the opposite side of the waterways, defense posts that were the start of the present Canadian cities of Toronto and Kingston. English authority infiltrated this French sphere with outposts at the mouth of the Oswego River.

Almost as important as this route was the straight path between the possessions of England and France by way of Champlain's lake. On it, the French entrenched themselves at Crown Point and Ticonderoga with interior fortifications along the Richelieu River. English authority extended northward from the center of its New York colony by building as bulwarks Forts Edward, Anne and William Henry. The first two guarded the "Great Carrying Place" between the Hudson River, Wood Creek and Lake Champlain while the latter surveyed Lake George from its southern tip. All these fortifications, on both sides of New York, became goals in the protracted campaigns to eliminate enemy threats and competition.

France on the Niagara Frontier

FRANCE HAD ALREADY ASSERTED its influence on the western edge of New York's area. There the waters of half a continent channeled through the 37-mile course of the Niagara River, and by the wild gorge French authority marched on its way to the heartland of North America. It was often a crowded thoroughfare. Lace-trimmed officers and colorfully uniformed regiments of the French Army moved to and from posts in the distant wilderness; more somberly clad missionaries passed by in the course of their campaigns of devotion; voyageurs led their loaded canoes and bateaux into the river's waters; and always, from far and near, there were painted and plumed Indians.

The road around Niagara's giant cataract was broad and smooth but there was nothing easy about the portage. Coming from the lower level of Lake Ontario, travelers climbed up three hills of the Niagara escarpment to reach the higher waters of Lake Erie. The last hill was so steep that even its descent was difficult. Supplies went up the portage road and furs went down. Every vessel had to be unloaded and moved from one level to the other and then reloaded. The portage of bark canoes was relatively simple, but the same could not be said of ponderous, board flatboats that also plowed the lake waters. All the work for decades was done by physical labor. Senecas supplied the main labor force. Only in the middle of the 18th century did the portage have available such conveniences as windlass, cables and sleds; later, horses and oxen contributed to the motive power. The longer portage by way of the south side of the route was preferred to that on the north. Along the southern banks of Niagara's waters deer were abundant, and "buffaloes are found on the south but not on the north shore," one French traveler reported to help explain the origin of the name of the State's second largest city.

The seven-mile portage road interrupted the water voyage but the journey resumed on Lake Erie, either on to the other Great Lakes or else by one of Erie's rivers to the interior of the midwest. From the promontory at Barcelona, another portage opened the way to hundreds of miles of inland waterways. A 10-mile carry through dense hardwood forests led up a 1,000-foot elevation to Lake Chautauqua. From the lake's outlet, Chautauqua water flowed into Chadakoin Creek, a tributary of Conewango Creek which, in turn, joined the Allegheny River at Warren, Pennsylvania. From this spot, the distance to *La Belle Rivière* was relatively short. Few travelers followed the

route regularly although it provided direct access to the extensive territory of the Ohio Valley. But Pierre Joseph Céloron de Blainville, the leader of an expedition to the Ohio, in 1749, left his name in the present Chautauqua County village of Celoron.

Brûlé and Dallion and after them Jesuits and Sulpicians introduced French influence into the Niagara region. Late in 1678, René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, who had received a license "to discover the western parts of New France," decided to build a boat on the Niagara River. His shipyard was located at a point on the river near the mouth of Cayuga Creek. With a narrow but deep channel and the protection of an island, the spot was suitable for constructing the first sailing vessel on the Great Lakes. The Senecas were much impressed by this "floating fort" even though the *Griffon* had to be towed most of the way up the Niagara before sailing into Lake Erie. Nothing is known of the *Griffon's* size, shape or rigging, nor, unfortunately, of the disastrous fate it met on the Great Lakes on its return voyage laden with furs from the west.

As part of the shipbuilding project, the first house in western New York was built at what is now Lewiston. More important, however, was the first construction at the strategic junction of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. There La Salle ordered built two redoubts, about 40 feet square, made of great timbers and joined by a palisade. La Salle spoke of the house that remained there in 1684 as "the most important on the whole lake." Denonville, too, recognized the strategic value of the spot when he placed a fortification there three years later following his expedition against the Senecas. The area's next structure was built in Lewiston at a site to the left of the road leading to the present Lewiston bridge. Erected in the latter part of May 1720, this *Magazin Royal* was a bark house, about 40 feet long and 30 feet wide, surrounded by a palisade. A meeting place for Indians and traders as well as a stopping place for convoys of French and Canadians on their way to and from assignments farther west, the *Magazin Royal* witnessed several years of history of the Niagara frontier.

The *Magazin Royal,* however, was not large enough to meet the demands of the area and a new structure had to be built. But every new construction disturbed the Iroquois. They disliked seeing these buildings on their land. Anything that resembled a fortification was the worst of all as it revealed hostile threats toward the Six Nations. The French announced they had to make a house of solid masonry to keep the supplies dry and in their new structure even the floors were stone. They referred to it as a "trading house" or a "stone house." Since its erection in 1726, it has been known as the "Castle." When

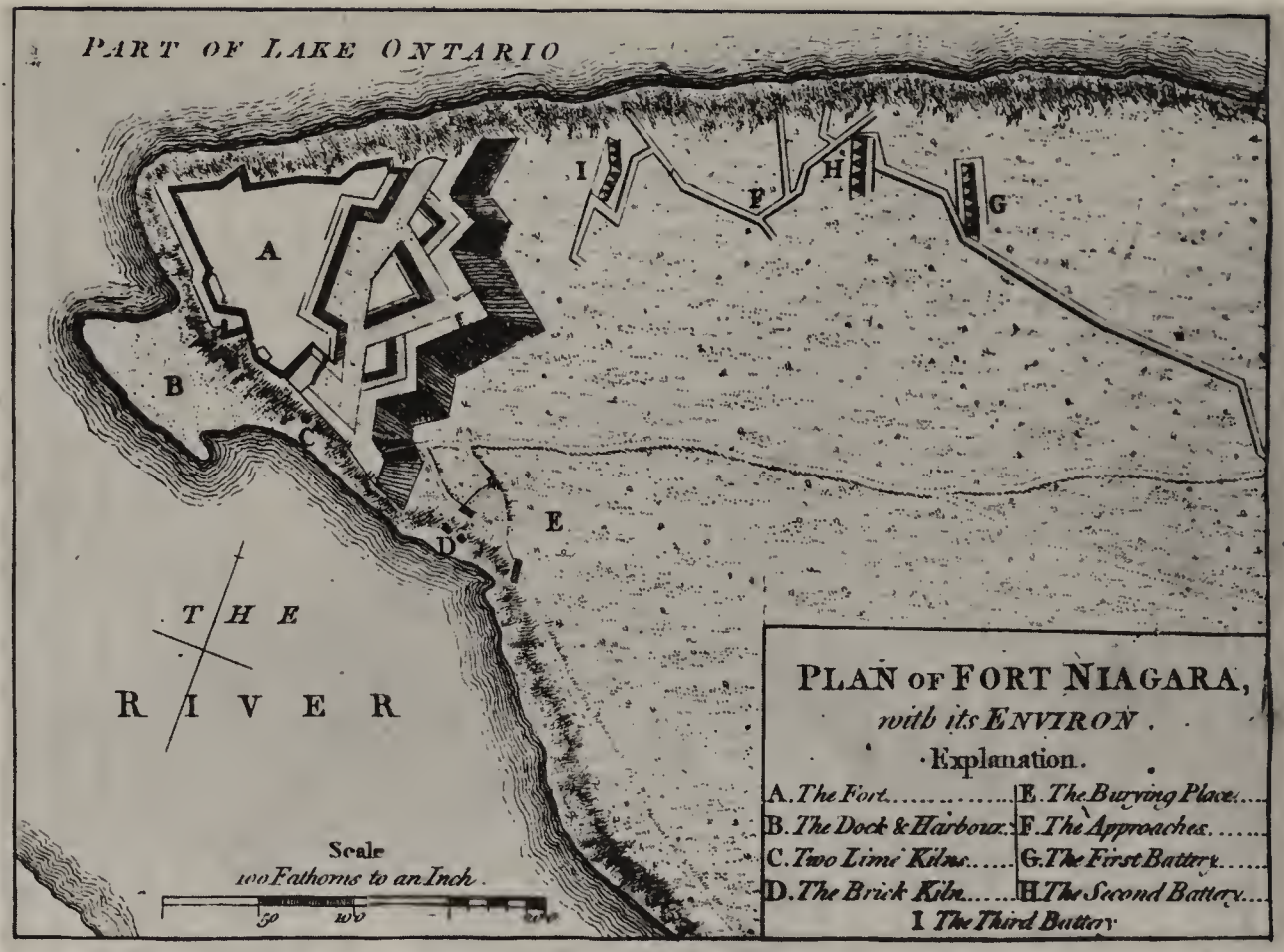
Fort Niagara, on the projection from the left, at the mouth of the Niagara River with Lake Ontario in the foreground and Lake Erie at the top. *Courtesy of New York State Power Authority*

it was completed, hordes of Indians arrived to gaze with astonishment on the massiveness of the building.

"America's Gibraltar" has stood at the corner of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River since that time, observing the passage of friend and foe and playing significant parts in subsequent wars. Fort Niagara flourished in spite of the usual difficulties. All supplies had to be brought from Europe and then redistributed from New France. Too often, inexplicable events delayed their arrival. Life at the outpost managed to have some amenities. Officers brought their families with them and a growing settlement surrounded the fort for both "women and ladies." Amateur dramatic shows helped to shorten the long periods of routine duties. And there were the frequent arrivals of new parties bound for the west and the return of others. A garden behind the Castle flourished with peach and cherry trees. But the erosive force of Lake Ontario's clear waters gradually gnawed away at the embankment, almost to the rear wall of the Castle itself. With the advantage of hindsight, numerous criticisms were directed against those who had selected Niagara's location.

The fort's chief function, however, was to make more convenient the trade in furs. In the first year after Niagara's opening, 2,580 beaver skins and almost as many deer skins came to the fort but the demand for other furs was so low that the Indians offered only five mink. A bartering room and the clerk's office brought together Indians and traders. Furs were exchanged for beads, bracelets, knives, mirrors, flour, guns and ammunition. Indians had come to depend on Europeans not just for luxuries but also for necessities. The time came, too, when the natives gave up preparing their own deerskin clothing and instead traded for blankets for covering. As part of the trade, the Indian hoped to quench his almost-insatiable thirst for alcohol. When there was no French brandy, they could go on to toss off English rum. Shrewd barterers soon learned that the English paid better prices for furs because they had succeeded in keeping down their costs of production and distribution.

Too many times, traders at Fort Niagara futilely watched fur-laden canoes pass below the Castle's embankment and continue on to the hated trading center at Oswego, started by the English in the same year that the Castle was constructed. In an effort to cut off this trade, the French built about a mile and a half above the falls another trading post, Fort Little Niagara. Opened for trade in May 1751, the fort stood between the mouth of Gill Creek and Grass Island. A triangular palisade surrounded the new trading post with bastions that touched the road to Fort Niagara. At the same time, a new and shorter



Plan of Fort Niagara. From La Rocque's *Plans and Forts in America*

portage road was completed that was easier on carts and which also "avoided the drunkards commonly found in the old" path. Scattered by Fort Little Niagara were huts for the Indians whose population numbered about 2,000. Many cultivated gardens with abundant crops of corn, beans, squash and pumpkins. Some of the Senecas worked for wages hauling cargoes over the portage road; others looked forward to pilfering what they could from the warehouse.

In Indian relations on the Niagara Frontier, one name stands out above all the rest. For 60 years the family of Joncaire played the most significant role in French-Indian relations. Louis Thomas de Joncaire, Sieur de Chabert, known by that title and identified as Chabert the Elder, and two of his 10 children—Philippe Thomas de Joncaire, the eldest son, referred to as Captain Joncaire, and the seventh child, Daniel de Joncaire, Sieur de Chabert et de Clausonne—ranged far and wide from the Mohawk to the Ohio Valley to convey French prestige to native settlements. Interpreter, soldier and adopted son of the Senecas, Chabert the Elder was a particularly sharp thorn in the English flesh. He trained his sons well to carry out the same role. Their regular rounds of visits and their gifts of wampum and other items that Indians prized kept many tribes friendly to the French. They succeeded so well that, for a time, they had the Mohawks on their side. They even arranged for blacksmiths and gunsmiths to make weapons and metal objects in Indian villages. As English influence increased, especially among the Iroquois, the Joncaires played a losing game. Without their efforts, however, French control would have been dissipated much sooner.

The Final Outposts

Champlain's valley was long a highway of warfare, both before and after his expedition in the summer of 1609. New France could never disregard the water level route that made invasion easy, whether the objectives were along the St. Lawrence or the Mohawk and Hudson. French officials took a particularly bold step in the lake's long history of triumph and tragedy when they decided to build on Champlain a stockaded fort in 1731. Its location was the hump of land that reaches from Crown Point toward Vermont. Plans for this elaborate outpost to forestall English action in the region developed slowly. Named Fort St. Frédéric after a French official, its outline gradually took shape in the form of a star while from within rose a conspicuous, high stone watchtower. The fort also had the usual

structures for baking, storage and ammunition as well as a church and a stone windmill. The hope that colonists could be enticed to settle the neighboring regions came to naught. Facing on nearby Bulwagga Bay, however, stood a small community that housed families of the garrison.

In one of the intermittent contests between the rival empires, St. Frédéric was described as "the seat of the hottest of the warfare." But by the end of its second decade of existence, the Crown Point fortification had been allowed to decay and complaints about its condition, structure and location were frequent and unrestrained. Rather than improve Fort St. Frédéric, engineers drew up plans for a new outpost in another strategic location.

Their choice for the final stronghold of French authority in New York's area was the place where Champlain had first displayed it 146 years previously. The high promontory above the shoreline where he had his fateful encounter with the Iroquois was an impressive spot for a fortification. Overlooking the outlet from Lake George, the position also commanded the approaches on Lake Champlain. Indians called the place "Chinonderoga" or "Cheonderoga"—"where waters meet"—or, as we know it at present, "Ticonderoga." The French preferred to call their new post "Fort Carillon," perhaps after the musical sounds of the water gushing from Lake George into Lake Champlain or else after the constant croaking and the shrill chimes of frogs in the nearby swamps.

For much of the five years following the French order of September 1755 to fortify Ticonderoga, quantities of equipment and manpower were devoted to erecting the most elaborate fortification in New York State, if not in the New World. Each season 2,000 to 3,000 men advanced up Champlain's lake to carve a fortress out of the wilderness. The sheer cliffs to the east and south of the elevation supplied the site with a natural advantage, but the gradual slopes in the other directions required the construction of defense works. Work crews started late in 1755 to shape oak timbers for the support of seven-foot earthworks. In succeeding years, they blasted and hauled stones from nearby areas and slashed through the forest's rim to open vistas on possible approach routes. Each year, the fort's design became more complex with the laying out of bastions and demilunes to enable the fort's defenders to destroy attacks from any angle. The entire defense position included outlying works on the portage between the lakes.

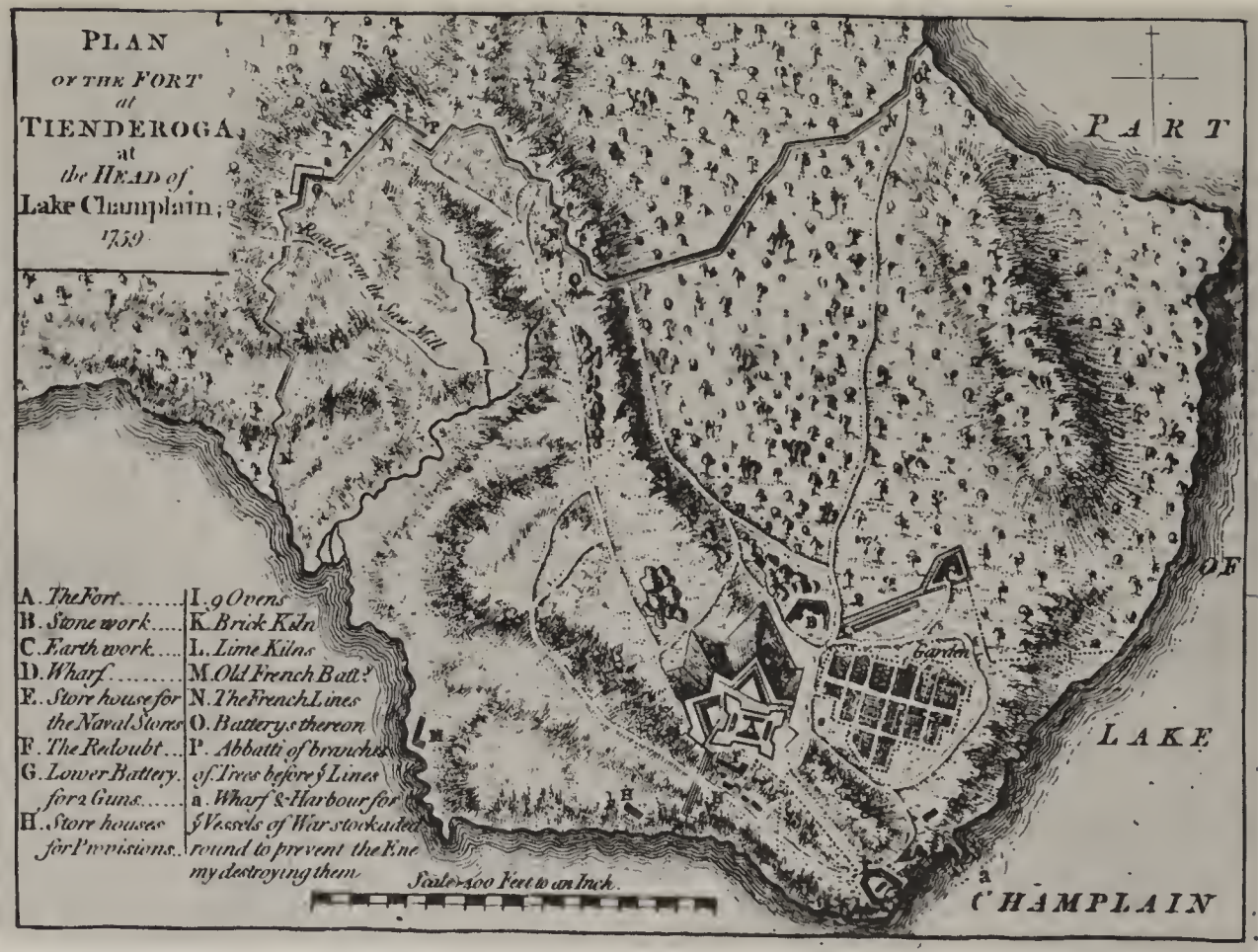
The fort had stone barracks but their capacity never housed all the assigned troops. Tents dotted the adjacent areas, while close to

the shore, and Champlain's battlefield, grew up the palisaded village of civilians that adjoined almost every post. There the small structures for wives and camp followers had their own gardens. In the community, too, were a chapel and wineshop, with the latter thriving much more than the former. The supply of wine and brandy constantly concerned most of the garrison, and the whole problem of logistics with supply lines extending across the Atlantic was one of momentous interest. Rations were never plentiful and sometimes had to be curtailed. When the meat supply was exhausted in the winter, a diet of horse and fish made up the deficiency. Ticonderoga's environs furnished a quantity of wildlife for many meals. But in the area lurked Indian and English enemies ready to attack the uncautious.

The frequent danger of attack added to the construction difficulties. Work crews labored feverishly yet feared a surprise attack by day or night. Ticonderoga's complement included Indian scouts along with French regulars and the Canadian militia, but no one ever completely counted on the reliability of the natives. With the arrival of the long, harsh winter season, only a small garrison remained at Ticonderoga; for these, boredom was added to the fear of attack.

Along with the elaborate plans, hasty construction, and accompanying fears, there was considerable discussion of the value of the designs and the appropriateness of their execution. In the record of jealous bickering, criticism was leveled at everything from the quality of the bread and the condition of the ambulances to the size of the fortification and the number of its defenders. Some officers seriously doubted Ticonderoga's ability to withstand an attack. When that attack came in July of 1758, Marquis de Montcalm, the French commanding officer, planned a masterful defense by ordering the hasty construction of abatis. This work of placing felled trees, with sharpened points facing in the direction of the attack, went on all night and proved to be the key to the fort's defense. Six times, between early afternoon and twilight, the bumbling English leader, General Abercromby, commanded his forces to assault the French defenses, but they never once dented the lines of the outnumbered defenders.

In the years preceding the futile English attack on Ticonderoga in the summer of 1758, New York had become the center for renewed rivalry between the competing empires. Serious conflict in the New York region in the first half of the 18th century had been avoided because of a mutual interest in preserving the fur trade. Trading interests in Albany and Montreal decreed a policy of neutrality in the area: warfare that interfered with trade must be prevented in



Plan of Fort Ticonderoga. From La Rocque's *Plans and Forts in America*

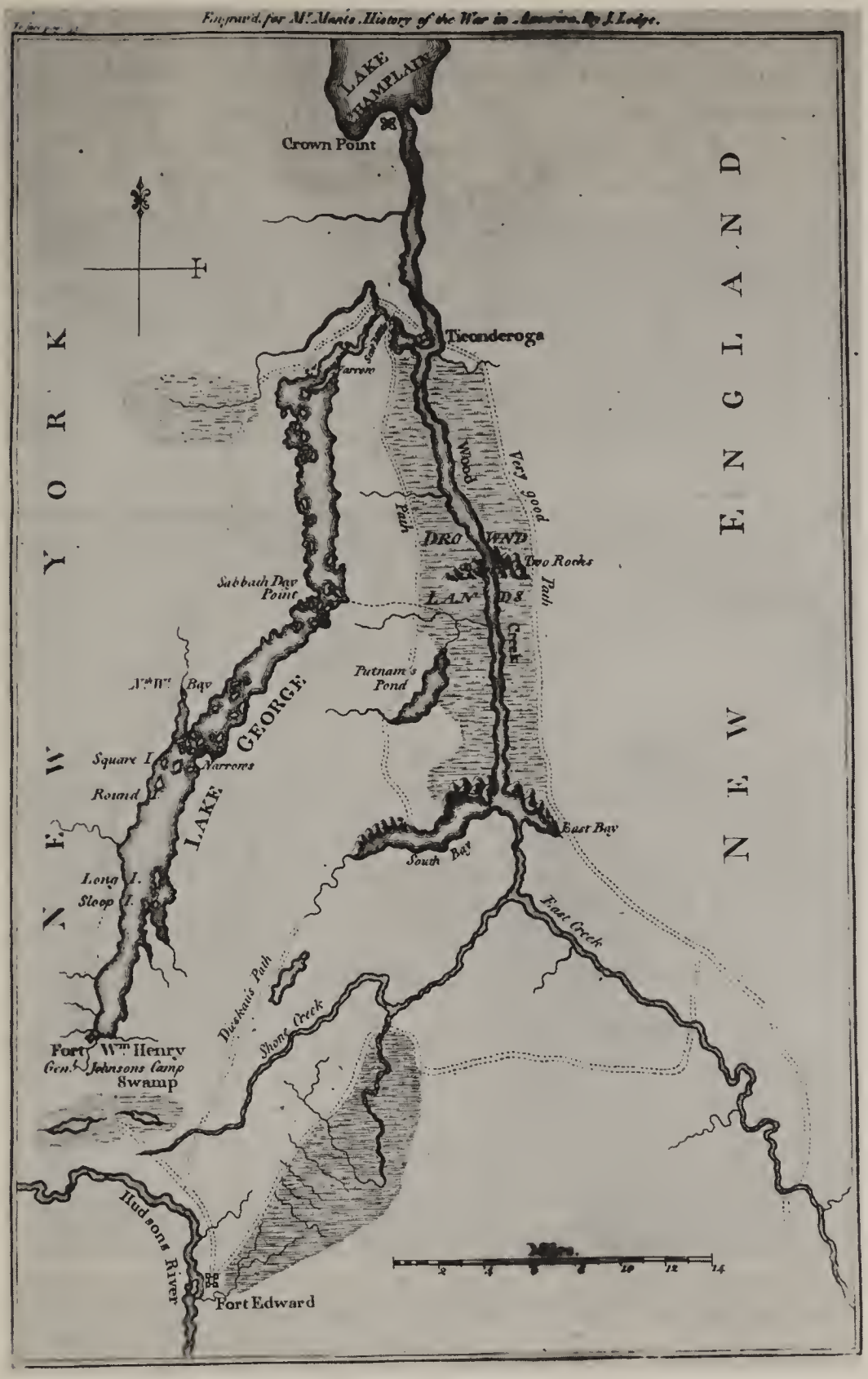
order that the flow of furs continue to nourish the economy and enrich the merchants. But at midcentury, rivalry became more bitter. Both sides determined to obtain exclusive control of the trade. The congress of delegates from the English colonies, held at Albany, in 1754, indicated the renewal of opposition to the French, and the representatives made many proposals to improve relations with their Iroquois allies.

In this climax of the intercolonial struggle, fortifications in New York became the keys to imperial control and New York soil was bloodied by numerous attempts to dislodge the opposition.

Confronted by a constantly enlarging military force, France took the offensive with the hope of smashing the enemy's threat. In August 1755, Count Dieskau led his soldiers, militia and braves from Fort St. Frédéric up Lake Champlain and into Lake George to strike at Fort Edward. Indian scouts, however, directed the invaders down the wrong road and Dieskau was forced to aim his main attack at the English encampment at the head of Lake George. The defense works there, consisting of wagons, trees and overturned boats, prevented a successful foray, but both sides suffered large losses. Dieskau, badly wounded, was captured. The remains of his army successfully returned to Ticonderoga without hindrance.

The following year, after the formal declaration of war by the British, the French again indicated plans to use Ticonderoga as a base for operations against the English in the area. Montcalm made a show of strengthening the fort, but quickly returned by canoe to Montreal, then hastened on to join a rendezvous at present-day Sackets Harbor. Divisions had assembled there to assault the English menace that perched above the Oswego River. From that location, three forts—Ontario on one side and George and Oswego on the other—threatened every French move on Lake Ontario and, what was equally bad if not worse, siphoned off the fur trade. The carefully planned French attack came off faultlessly. Landing forces moved at night close to the fortifications and engineers built a road through swampland for the artillery. Fort Ontario was evacuated and from it French guns battered Fort Oswego and the road to Fort George. After a siege of three days, the sudden capitulation of the fort surprised the invaders. A week after the surrender, they demolished the fortifications and laid waste the garrison gardens. The French haul of cannon, currency and prisoners marked the capture of Oswego as a signal French victory.

The annual buildup of forces in the Lake George-Lake Champlain theater of war again guided French strategy in the summer of 1757.



The Lake Champlain-Lake George area in 1756.
From Mante's *History of the War in America*

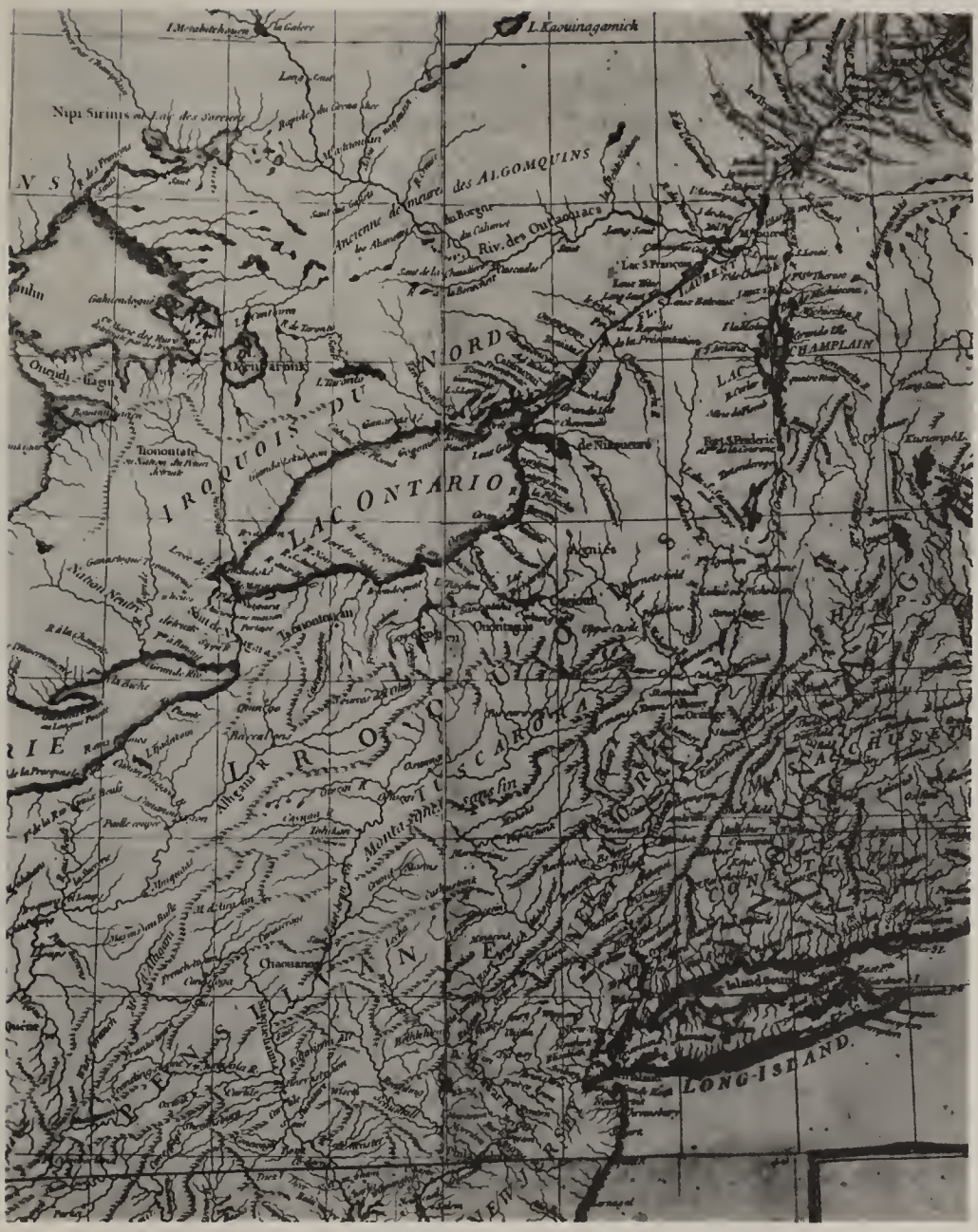
In the end of July, Montcalm moved invasion columns from Ticonderoga toward Fort William Henry, the English stronghold at the head of Lake George. During two days of cannon fire, French batteries fired on the fort every two minutes until finally the white flag appeared from the ruined British ramparts. After the surrender, Indian allies of the French savagely attacked the prisoners in an unavoidable deed that inspired discussion for generations. Montcalm followed up his victory by burning William Henry with the expectation of completely removing the English threat.

Montcalm's successes at Oswego and Lake George, and his defense of Ticonderoga in July 1758, gave the despondent French some sentiment of optimism. In other skirmishes, they had repelled English attacks and they had destroyed minor English posts in the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys. In New York, at least, the situation seemed bright.

All these campaigns had been typical French maneuvers: rapid advance and equally rapid retreat. Neither Oswego nor Fort William Henry was occupied; victories were never followed up nor gains consolidated.

Reasons for this policy of curtailed campaigning lay along the St. Lawrence and across the Atlantic. With a population of less than 65,000—compared to a population of approximately 100,000 in the 13 English colonies—New France could not support a military force of sufficient size to follow through on offensive actions. The relatively small number of *habitants* in the territory available never developed an effective agricultural economy. More troops and more supplies would have to be moved from Europe and every transport afforded an additional target for expanding English seapower. Supply lines already radiating from New France in several directions could not be stretched more tightly to support all-out offensive operations.

New France furnished a degree of prestige to the French Empire but the fur trade, while profitable, was not dependable. Moreover, the North American colony was only one of many areas of interest that stretched from Europe to India to the West Indies and, in *livres* and *sous,* the sugar trade from the latter area reaped far greater profits than did all the American mainland. France's final stand in North America, in the fourth colonial conflict of the 18th century, was merely one phase in the prolonged Anglo-French struggle for imperial control and continental domination. As for France, especially in New York, the record proved that too few, with too little resources, tried to accomplish too much in too many places.



New York and adjacent areas from a French map of 1755, *Canada, Louisiane, et terres Angloises par le sr. d'Anville*

Added to the problems that related to imperial policies were grievous local disputes. French and Canadians did not get along well with each other—a relationship similar to that between provincials and imperial officials in the English colonies. But in New France, rivalry and jealousy reached an extreme degree. Opportunities for nepotism, kickbacks, graft and other forms of dishonesty were plentiful and filled many pockets with personal profits. All of which added to costs and placed French trade in an unsatisfactory competitive position.

In 1757, England's new minister, William Pitt, determined to smash the enemy at all costs and marshaled his far-superior resources in an all-out assault against France's tottering territories.

Acadia and the Ohio Valley were lost during the seeming successes in New York. Yet engineers labored valiantly to strengthen the defenses at Niagara and Ticonderoga although there was not sufficient time to make up for years of neglect and inefficiency. The noose was tightening around New York and the nerve cords to New France would soon be smashed.

The first pressure was applied early in July 1759, when the English struck at Niagara. Their landing party advanced from Lake Ontario by way of Four Mile Creek, an inlet that distance from the Castle. Steadily the attackers dug their entrenchments and each morning's sun showed the lines closer to the defense works. Day and night, through storm and fog, the siege continued. Although the English commanding officer was killed, his successor, Sir William Johnson, sustained the assault without hesitation. Batteries of unusually large guns poured shot into the fort. Pouchot, Niagara's commander—who had laid out the defenses there and at Ticonderoga—had only inferior arms, and his firepower had little effectiveness against the enemy. By careful scouting, Johnson learned of a relief column from Fort Little Niagara and directed its bloody rout near present-day Youngstown, at the spot known as *La Belle Famille*. A further disheartening turn for the defenders came with the complete failure of a sortie from the fort. The French troops, pounded into weariness after the siege of two and a half weeks, were forced to give up the struggle and surrender Fort Niagara on July 25, 1759.

While Niagara was under siege, Jeffery Amherst headed English divisions totaling 10,000 to 12,000 men toward Ticonderoga to avenge Abercromby's inept invasion of the previous year. This time, the situation was much different and the defenders of the outpost numbered less than one-fifth the size of the attacking army. They knew they were no match for the enemy and determined not to risk

their meager resources. The main force withdrew from Ticonderoga to Fort St. Frédéric leaving behind a small battalion to blow up the four-year-old fortress on July 26, 1759. At the end of the month, the French also abandoned Fort St. Frédéric and returned to New France, leaving forever the lake that Champlain had entered 150 years previously.

British amphibious forces soon swept into the St. Lawrence to stab at the heart of New France by capturing Quebec and Montreal. Four years later the peace treaty of 1763 formally acknowledged the conquest of the French Empire in North America.

View of a portion of Fort Ticonderoga at present

Courtesy of New York State Department of Commerce

French Survivals in Our State

THE RETREAT ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN in 1759 ended the century and a half of French influence within our State. Two hundred years later, we have the remains of torture sites as well as the restorations and reconstructions of fortifications. They remind us that New York State was the stage on which brave and adventurous men played life and death roles and on which empires competed for the key to a continent.

French settlers also perpetuated their influence in many peaceful ways. Exiles from 17th century France intermixed with the Dutch colonists who followed Henry Hudson's route into our State. These Huguenots lived in all of the early settlements in the Hudson Valley. Some French-speaking farmers moved onto the fertile fields along the Wallkill River, where they built fieldstone houses that still stand in New Paltz. In 1689, Huguenots purchased part of Pelham Manor and named it New Rochelle after their former home.

Later continental upheavals brought others from Champlain's native land to New York State. In 1792, Pierre Chassanis headed a group of French nobles in arranging the purchase of 630,000 acres of North Country land from William Constable, one of the State's leading land speculators. The actual purchase and transfer was for a much smaller number of acres but the French promoters formulated extensive plans for developing these holdings. Remembering the great natural resource of the region, they named the enterprise the Castor Land Company; "castor" was the French word for beaver. Instead of the cities they planned at the present locations of Castorland and Dexter, they cleared only a small part of their acreage, built one sawmill and a few log houses.

Somewhat more successful in developing northern New York as a refuge for the French nobility was James D. Le Ray de Chaumont, brother-in-law of Chassanis. He married an American wife and spent much of his life in New York. He also made numerous voyages to France to attract his countrymen to "Little France" in the upstate wilderness. At the center of this "royal court" in the New World was "The Hermitage" of Madame de Feriet, a former maid of honor to Marie Antoinette. Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's elder brother, as well as close associates of the Emperor and other titled travelers visited the asylum. There they plotted the release of Napoleon I from his exile on St. Helena. But when the European situation became more tranquil, the emigrés ended their wilderness sojourn and returned to France, leaving behind only a sprinkling on the Jefferson County

map of French place names, such as Chaumont, Deferiet, Theresa, La Fargeville, Cape Vincent, French Creek and similar names of Gallic origin.

Champlain's valley was the scene of other invasions and attempted invasions. More fruitful was the later arrival of descendants of settlers in the communities of New France. French-Canadians brought their axes into every lumber camp of the Adirondack forests. Shiny blades flashed between the shadows and their saws ripped into huge trees in the days when timber was the most essential of all our assets. And in the bunkhouses, when they were not singing songs similar to those the voyageurs had sung to shorten the long lake voyages, they told terrifying tales of the part-man, part-wolf *loup-garou* or about the *chasse-galerie,* the swift airborne passage that the lonely lumberman could make to his family in return for the sale of his soul.

When sportsmen made the area a haven of importance, the same men of the woods became famous as Adirondack guides. As combination hunter, fisher, trapper, cook and story-teller, they had colorful careers in their natural element. New York will always be indebted to them for their skills as forest craftsmen in developing the Adirondack guide-boat.

French Canadians also came to live on farms south of the international boundary line or to work on boats and in mills and mines, in cities and villages from Malone to Plattsburgh and as far away as Cohoes. They brought with them Old World customs and traditions, such as the noisy *chiverie* to celebrate a wedding, the lighting of holy candles to prevent lightning from striking, pork pie for Christmas feasts and a fondness for pea soup. Other arrivals from Champlain's homeland introduced many more delicacies of continental cuisine. The descendants of Champlain's *habitants* as well as his countrymen from old France have in these and many other ways added enrichment to the diversity of life within the Empire State.

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